

Morality united with Policy;
OR,
REFLECTIONS
ON THE
OLD AND NEW GOVERNMENT OF FRANCE;
AND ON
VARIOUS IMPORTANT TOPICS
OF
CIVIL AND ECCLESIASTICAL REFORM.

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BY
ROBERT FELLOWES, A. B.

OF ST. MARY HALL, OXFORD;

AUTHOR OF A PICTURE OF CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY,
AND AN ADDRESS TO THE PEOPLE, &c.

Quelle Science doit le plus interesser l'esprit de l'homme que la politique! Cette auguste science qui ayant pour objet le bonheur d'une nation entiere, fait d'une etat, une grande machine bien montée, bien organisée, et de tous les citoyens un corps animé souple et vivant. MERCIER.

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P R E F A C E.

THE following reflections, some of which have often been the favourite theme of my solitary contemplations, were written previous to the twenty-fifth of last December. Consequently, though I have mentioned the subversion of the directorial despotism, whose destruction I have long anticipated with emotions of prophetic satisfaction*, I could give no opinion on the subject of the new consular government.—That government appears to me to possess many advantages, which did not belong to the theories of Condorcet or

* See "Picture of Christian Philosophy," in a note at the bottom of page 261.

Barrere, or to the former disastrous system of Syeyes. The executive power, of which the division was a great and fatal error in the former systems, is now concentrated in unity. Every energy, necessary to the practical operations of the government, is vested in the chief consul; who, perhaps, enjoys as much real power as was possessed by the ancient kings of France.—The representative system, of whose transcendent and imaginary excellencies, Thomas Paine was once so warm a panegyrist, has been nominally retained, but so essentially modified, that it is in fact abolished. How will this frustrate the hopes of the visionary and the wishes of the turbulent! —The comprehensive mind of Syeyes, aware of the evils of universal suffrage, and conscious that it was necessary for the peace of the country and for the very existence of social order to restrain the inflammable temper of the jacobins, and to

prevent the sudden explosions of an ungovernable democracy, has, with a wary policy, projected a graduated, and, as it were, pyramidal ascent from the dregs of the people to the summit of the government; and in the constitution itself he has so combined check within check and wheel within wheel, that, if it can withstand the mighty and impending crash of the external enemy, it will, I think, be capable of maintaining internal peace, and of resisting the conflict of domestic factions. —These are but speculations; but, on a subject so important, who, that is not entirely insensible to the interests of his species, can help speculating?—My first wish is to see the crown of France restored to the ancient and illustrious line of the Bourbons, with just and reasonable limitations; but, if events shall render this impossible, my next wish is, that Great Britain

and the rest of Europe may find in the moderation of Buonaparte, in the complex organisation of the new government, and particularly in the germination of better principles, and a *purser morality* in France, a sufficient barrier against the irruptions of tumultuary injustice and the spreading flame of republican ambition.

On the interesting question of reform in our own country, I have spoken my mind with freedom, but with moderation; and I earnestly conjure those who peruse these pages, never to forget that justice and humanity are the *wisest policy*; and that the great principles of rational liberty have an intimate connexion with those of genuine christianity.

The most useful, because the most conducive to human happiness, of all studies,

is the study of morality;—of morality considered in its connexion with politics, and in its divine incorporation with theology.—It is political morality, or policy, harmonising with the unchanging statutes of moral obligation, which sheds the brightest lustre on civil institutions; which constitutes the strength and the safety of governments, the glory and the happiness of nations.—Theological morality,—that morality, which is more especially honoured with celestial aspirations, comprehends those rules of life which are to be found in the christian system; which the founder of that system did not publish as new, but confirm as old; which he did not announce as discoveries above human powers, but which he consecrated by more than human functions.—Political morality considers the agency of the moral law only in its relations to time, and in its

influence on the great aggregates of mankind in the kingdoms of the world; but revelation, which establishes the same law, shows us the necessity of its coercive energy in the detail of private intercourse, in the minutiae of our conduct, and in the very thoughts of our hearts;—and, what is most important, in its relation to eternity.—As far as morals, whether regarded with respect to national policy or to individual conduct, are associated with the relations of time, they are discoverable by reason;—but nothing less than a divine communication can make known to us their connexion with that state, when time itself (that wonderful abstraction, that impalpable phantom, but that *awful reality*) shall be no more.

ROBERT FELLOWES.

Harbury, near Southam, Warwickshire,
January 10, 1860.

MORALITY UNITED WITH POLICY;

OR,

REFLECTIONS ON THE OLD AND NEW GOVERNMENTS
OF FRANCE, &c. &c. &c.

THE advocates for the French revolution have been too prone to draw a gloomy and distorted picture of the state of France before it. To give more beauty and splendour to the new order of things, they have vilified the system which preceded it. They have sketched a frightful caricature of the old "régime," in order to decorate the character or palliate the excesses of the new. They have portrayed grievances, which had either no existence, or which did not exist in the degree which is represented. They endeavoured to inflame the passions by glowing exaggerations of individual oppression.—One instance of injustice, well described and set forth in that vivid particularity which interests attention and kindles sympathy,

will often excite a stronger and more lasting indignation, than a mass of cruelties, represented in general terms, and without those striking and individuating circumstances, which impart freshness and animation to what would, otherwise, be a vapid narrative. The affecting catastrophe of Lucretia caused the expulsion of Tarquin; and inflamed the popular resentment to a degree to which, perhaps, it would not, otherwise, have been carried by the accumulated sum of national oppression or a promiscuous combination of greater atrocities.

The pathetic narrative of a single murder will draw tears from those eyes, which could not be made to weep at the recital of thousands and thousands slaughtered in the havoc of battle. The heart of man seems capable of feeling only for individuals, at least the sufferings of an individual excite the greatest perturbation of the passions. But the individual sensations thus excited are often generalised, as it were, into principles, and influence a great extent of action. The old government of France has been most successfully reviled

by a partial display of single and isolated acts of oppression. Individuals yielding to the fervour of their feelings, have been induced to consider such acts as the unvarying character and constant practice of the government; and their particular sensations have swelled into a general principle of abhorrence.

There were, indeed, no written, or efficient laws in France in favour of public liberty. The power of either making new laws or repealing old, or suspending their execution, was vested in an individual. But we must not calculate the degree of oppression by the power of oppressing. The administration of a government is often at variance with the form of its constitution; and it is not so proper to appreciate the operations of a government by the theory as it is to appreciate the theory by its operations. The forms of a government may be free, and yet its practice may be despotic, and the people slaves. In the same manner, the forms of a government may be despotic, and yet the people enjoy all the advantages of freedom. Thus, in considering the state of France, anterior to the re-

volution, we ought not so much to estimate its oppression by the arbitrary forms of the government, as by the actual, palpable, and existing condition of the people. Did the actual state of the people, the security of their lives and properties, their improving circumstances, their increasing prosperity, and the universal excitement of their industry, indicate any of the advantages of freedom? If so, the old government becomes a subject more fit for panegyric than for censure. The malignity of its principle ceases to excite abhorrence in the beneficence of its operations.

Positive laws have little influence where opinion is adverse to their operation. Thus, for instance, the penal laws of this country are of a very sanguinary complexion; but public opinion is diametrically opposite to their literal execution. And, perhaps, in no country in the world, notwithstanding the apparently barbarous and bloodshedding edicts of our penal code, is justice so well tempered with humanity as in this country. Compared with many trivial offences for which death is ordered, how few, comparatively, are deprived of life!

According to the letter of the law, the punishment is often greater than the crime; but in the actual execution of the law, by the wise administrators of it in this country, it will, I think, be found that the punishment is seldom ill assorted with the offence. But, were a foreigner unacquainted with the actual administration of justice in this country; with the positive operation of our criminal laws, and the peculiar mildness of the English government, to peruse the dark and vindictive pages of our penal statutes, he would form a very erroneous and false opinion of our clemency. He would think us a nation without any wise notions of criminal justice;—a nation thirsty for blood, and eager for the tragedy of an execution. But such a conception would be contrary to the fact, and derogatory to that sympathising tenderness which is one of the peculiar excellencies of the English character.

To any one, unacquainted with the actual state of France, previous to the revolution, the old government may appear a monster of deformity, a system of the most merciless tyranny, incapable of amelioration, and meriting nothing but destruc-

tion. Such a person would naturally confound the power possessed by the king, with the power exercised by him : looking through the medium of books, rather than of facts, he would behold in the French monarch nothing but a despot ; (how little did the inoffensive, the mild, pacific Lewis deserve the name ?) and in the French monarchy, no features but those of the severest and most execrable oppression.

Arbitrary power terrifies by its very sound ; men imagine it associated with every species of cruelty and vexation, without considering by how many secret and invisible means, how many benign influences, this power is checked even in those countries where there are no positive laws to control its operations. Arbitrary power *did exist* in France ; but, how seldom did it exert itself ? by how many causes was it moderated ?

There is something more formidable in the name of despotism, than in the actual bonds of a despotic government. We are all the creatures of association ; and, from our earliest infancy, we learn to connect sensations of pleasure with ideas of liberty ;

and consequently we associate none but emotions of fear and sensations of abhorrence with that government, which is invested with arbitrary power; and where liberty is unknown in name, *though it may exist in practice.*

People do not sufficiently consider, that, though the government of France, previous to the revolution, was a despotism, yet that its subjects did actually, and, as it were by connivance, if not by express and positive permission, enjoy all, or almost all, the advantages of those who reside under the canopy of freedom.

We are too apt to think only of the absolute, independent sway, which the French kings possessed, without considering by how many powerful causes that sway was checked, how its ferocity, even when it aspired to be ferocious, was moderated, and now it eventually was, at least under Louis XVI. a mild, benign, and gentle reign.

We see the French monarch armed with the odious power of "lettres de cachet," and we im-

mediately fancy ourselves carried to the dungeons of the Bastille, where we behold thousands languishing in captivity—the victims of an un pitying tyranny. But how little truth is there in this picture of the imagination?

The Bastille, which had been portrayed as a sort of infernal charnel-house, where cruelty killed its victims by inches and where hecatombs were sacrificed to lawless power;—this Bastille, where slavery was supposed for ever to clank her chains, and despair to press her forehead, which was thought piled with the carcases of the dead, or filled with the groans of the dying, contained, on its capture, only five victims*; and of these five not one the victim of a despotic or capricious ty-

* “ Lorsque le peuple s’est emparé de la Bastille, il a trouvé quatre ou cinq prisonniers dans cette célèbre forteresse. L’un d’eux étoit fou et les autres avoient commis des crimes avérés; les archives de ce séjour ont été compulsées, et dans l’espace de trois cents ans, le nombre des malheureux qui l’ont habité ne monte qu’à trois cents.”—Du gouvernement, des mœurs, &c. en France avant la révolution. Pages 108, 109. White, Fleet Street.

This work was written by M. Senac de Meilhan, intendant of Douai in French Flanders, under the old government. It is a very interesting, and, I believe, *with some few abatements*, an impartial publication.

ranny. Consider this, ye who rail against monarchy, and who deem kings, like spiders, always watching for prey !

Those who have written with so much violence against the old despotism of France, and have lavished so much panegyric on the new, and the far worse despotism that has succeeded it, have rather imagined, than proved, the oppressive and tyrannical agency of the old government.

France was indeed a despotism, so far as that the monarch did, in name, enjoy absolute power ; and so far as that no positive laws existed for the protection of civil and political liberty against the tyranny of the monarch or the oppressions of the government.

In France, though civil liberty could not be found in a code of written laws, yet despotism was, perhaps, restrained by a controul even stronger than that of positive law—the controul of custom and public opinion ; which are great checks on the licentious use of power by any tyrant, in any

country : but these causes exercised a most extensive and powerful operation in France, and perhaps formed almost as good a safeguard for the liberty of the subject as could have been found in the written statutes of a freer country.

Positive laws have little influence where custom or opinion are adverse to their operation ; so custom and opinion have often the same beneficial effects as positive laws. The French kings possessed, in their own persons at least, far more than three centuries previous to the revolution, both the legislative and executive powers. They could both enact laws and enforce them. They could both impose taxes and order their collection. But can we produce any instances, at least in the latter part of the monarchy, where they made this power (too great certainly for an individual) subservient to the purposes of personal avarice or revenge ?

Did the king make statutes in order to take away the lives of any particular individuals ? Did he lay on imposts, only to oppress obnoxious persons ? Did he, like an eastern bashaw, send his messengers to

break open the rich man's coffers, or to plunder the miser's store?

If personal liberty were a little more insecure, was not private property as safe in France as in England? The great distinction (perhaps *the only just distinction*) between a free and a despotic state consists in this, that, in the former, private property is protected, and the accumulation encouraged by the security of enjoyment;—in the latter, private property is insecure; its accumulation is discouraged; and it is always exposed to the capricious violence of the despot or the greedy rapacity of some of his subordinate agents.

Now which of these descriptions agrees with the old French government? Certainly the former. The industrious might accumulate, or the miser hoard, without dread of molestation from the monarch or any of his dependants. Great injustice and gross partiality characterise all the measures of despotism; and particularly in its pecuniary exactions. Its financial operations generally tend to individual oppression.

Hence in despotic states public credit languishes; the spirit of industry is half-stifled;—fearful of expanding its free energies in broad and open day, it hides, as it were, its face, and throws a veil over the success of its operations.

This was not the case in France; the pressure of taxation was not directed by the caprice or envy or avarice of the government against particular individuals. All were equally obliged to contribute to the public necessities; as the exemptions of the clergy and nobility, particularly the latter, were rather nominal than real*.

In France, the rich capitalists, many of whom have since bled under the axe of republican injustice, and whom demagogues have murdered for the

* Dans un moment d'humeur contre ses enfants ingrats, M. Necker dévoila enfin la vérité, et déclara à l'Assemblée Constituante, " que ces exemptions, si décriées, de la noblesse et du clergé ne s'élevoient pas au-dessus de *sept millions* tournois (ou 3 18, 181 livres sterlins)—que la moitié de cette somme appartenait aux privilégiés du Tiers Etat,—et que les droits de contrôle supportés par les deux premiers ordres réparoient amplement l'inégalité établie dans l'imposition ordinaire." —Du gouvernement, des mœurs; et des conditions en France avant la révolution, &c. page 59.—A Londres, chez J. White, 1795.

mere sake of their wealth, were as well protected from great and partial exactions as they are in this country. Public credit displayed its full and wholesome energies; and, under the inspiring auspices of that tutelary divinity, commerce spread her sails; and the spirit of industry darting from the centre to the extremities, from the land to the ocean, animated every fibre of the nation, and pervaded every province of the kingdom.

Under the monarchy, the poor were gradually emerging to wealth and comfort. The third estate, increasing in riches and rising in importance, began to rival the nobles; and that just, that mild, *that only practicable equality*, which arises from the general diffusion of property, and the universal excitement of industry, began to appear in that kingdom, which has been represented as the seat of the grossest inequality and oppression. Such was the state of France previous to the revolution. How is the picture altered since?

The nominal despotism of France has been changed into a real despotism. Mankind are gulled

by names. Under the old system, the French are supposed to have groaned under the most oppressive servitude, because the government was *called absolute*. Under the new system, slavery is supposed to have vanished, because it is decorated with tricoloured streamers, and labelled with the seductive names of liberty and equality.

The tree is best-judged by its fruits; and the fruits which have been borne by this tree of Gallic liberty, have been found bitter whenever they have been tasted, and the seeds have proved pestilential wherever they have been blown. In France itself the fruits of this rare and all-celebrated, all-restoring, and restorative plant have been pillage, proscription, massacre, virtue blasted, marriage ridiculed, immorality turned into a code, and injustice formed into a system. Since the revolution public credit, which is the great spring and stay of public prosperity, which gives energy to commerce and animation and soul to the industry of the nation,—public credit, which is the fruitful parent of private integrity, and which streams the vital flame of honesty through all the varied ramifications of pri-

vate intercourse, has vanished; and with it has set the glory of France; the only permanent source of wealth, the only solid base of greatness. The new government, though professing to be the friend of virtue, the enemy of oppression, and the administrator of eternal justice, has been faithless to its engagements. Instead of being employed to pay the public creditor, the public money has been wantonly lavished in visionary and vainglorious schemes of domination, or fraudulently embezzled by private speculation. The despots at the helm, unable to fill their coffers to the extent of their rapacity, or to support their tottering power by wise and temperate measures of finance, have had recourse to the most unjust and partial exactions,—to a system of robbery at home and of devastation abroad, unequalled in the annals of mankind.

I have no hesitation therefore in saying, that the government of France, *though despotic before, has been more despotic since the revolution.*—Before the revolution the government certainly was a tyranny, because the legislative and executive powers were centred in an individual, because there was no in-

intermediate or representative power to stand between the king and the people. But then we are to consider that the sharpe edge of this tyranny was worn off, as it were, by long use, and smoothed away by the gentle touch of civilization and of ancient custom. If the king were a despot, he was an hereditary one; his power was at its highest; he could not increase it by encroachment; and he had no motives to exercise it with severity, but had many to use it with lenity and moderation. An hereditary tyrant is always less ferocious and oppressive than the ephemeral despot;—a demagogue hailed by the acclamations of the mob to-day, and sacrificed to their resentment on the morrow.

Contrast the mild Louis with any of the ambitious or ferocious usurpers who stripped him of his crown, and then successively wore it themselves, though cast into a more ugly form, and the hereditary monarch, exercising the attributes of royalty, will appear like a divinity contrasted with demons. Of those persons to whom the destinies of the French empire have been committed, from the first foundation of the republic to the fall of the

late directory, is there, I say, one among them who can vie with the lamented Louis in the love of justice, or in sincere and affectionate attachment to the public welfare? Answer this question, ye who clamour for an elective sovereignty, and who would wade through seas of blood to waste the public happiness with the manifold vexations of a changing sceptre.

The benevolent Louis, seated on the throne of his ancestors, ruled rather by authority than by power; rather by the vigorous impulse of affection than by the trembling nerve of fear. The ancient glory of the monarchy cast a secret lustre around his person; and envy, which is so apt to be excited by the view of a superior, yielded to admiration. He wielded a sceptre which had been wielded by his ancestors for eleven centuries; which, if it had been originally obtained by usurpation, had been consecrated by the consent of ages. Popular love had sanctioned the possession, and clemency was manifested in the use. Since the revolution the government has been changed into a freer form; but it seems to have imbibed a more arbitrary spirit.

The legislative and executive powers have been divided in appearance; but, in reality, have been more completely identified than they ever were even under an eastern tyranny.

The legislative and executive powers under the new system, instead of being a wholesome check on, or a mutual aid to each other, have been alternately devouring and devoured. For some part, indeed far the greater part of the revolution, the executive and legislative powers were ultimately possessed by the jacobin mob of Paris; who made and unmade laws, who changed and subverted, and subverted and changed the government, at its pleasure. At one period, the convention was domineered over by a committee of public safety; which committee was domineered over by Robespierre; before whom the members crouched like lambs before the tiger; and who possessed, for a considerable time, the executive and legislative and judicial powers. The convention was merely a servile parliament to register his decrees, the jacobin club were the officers of his police, and the revolutionary tribunal was his executioner. At last,

the convention, goaded to madness, crushed the usurper by an impulse of despair.

Then a fairer prospect was opened ; but it was soon overcast. The dragon was slain, but his tyranny survived. The jacobins were still all-powerful. The new constitution of 1795 was accepted, and the powers of the state were arranged ; the legislative and executive powers were again disjoined, and a council of elders was interposed in order to keep them asunder, and preserve the equipoise of the government.

This plan soon failed ; and it was ushered in by an act of the most flagrant tyranny. The people were stripped of the elective franchise, and two thirds of the convention voted themselves, without asking the permission of the people, the legislators of the new government. The constitution had not been long established before the discordancy of its motions showed the jarring elements of which it was composed ; and the feebleness of its action proved its inadequacy to the great purpose for which it was designed.

The directory and the councils continued for a season in a state of hostile imbecility, till the directors, more crafty than their opponents, called in the sword to settle the dispute, and, without a single formality of justice, sent part of the popular representation to taste the fruits of republican liberty on the unwholesome coast of Guiana.

Since that period the councils made a faint struggle to recover their independence; but they soon became once more the passive instruments of tyranny; till both directors and councils and the constitution, which the sovereign people had accepted, and all the national authorities had so often sworn to maintain, vanished before the sword of Buonaparte. The political edifice of the great nation fell with almost as much facility as a child would blow down a house of cards.

Such is a rapid sketch of the *free state* of that republic which has succeeded the monarchy; and, whoever will seriously reflect on it, will be convinced that France has changed a *bad government*

for a worse; and that the French have neither virtue nor wisdom, nor constancy, for the simple majesty of republican institutions.

Had the states general, at the commencement of the revolution, entered, in the name of the nation, into a solemn and reciprocal agreement with the king about the privileges which he should abandon and which he should retain; had they followed that mild and temperate course which a learned gentleman of our own country has well delineated*; had they adopted those measures which are *essential to private and public liberty*, they would have consulted the real and permanent happiness of the nation; they would have set just barriers to the kingly power;—barriers which no future tyrant could have destroyed; and which it would even have been as inconsistent with his interest, as with his safety, to attempt to destroy;—and finally, they would have effectually precluded even the possibility of those calamitous scenes, which have followed, one

* See *Du gouvernement, &c. en France avant la revolution*, 8vo. White, page 260.

after another, in the long tragedy of the revolution.

When the states general had met, the French had recovered their ancient free government; and their great study ought then to have been to incorporate that government with those modern improvements which were necessary to accommodate it to the habits, manners, and opinions, of the people, and *to make it keep pace with the diffusion of knowledge and the progress of civilization.*

Had the French attempted this, without labouring to found a government on the volatile vapour of metaphysical refinement, they would have consulted the real interests of their country. But they threw off with too much precipitation all regard for ancient institutions,—institutions which were interwoven with the prejudices and affections of the people. They aspired to attain, at one bound, the highest pinnacle of freedom; and in the rash attempt they have fallen, as might have been expected, into the lowest state of slavery.

As it is generally a vain attempt to force the growth of civilization beyond the line to which there is a predisposing tendency in the existing, improveable, and improving condition of the people, so it is a foolish, and perhaps wicked one, to force improvements in the political system of any people beyond the degree of which they are susceptible, by the state of their knowledge, their opinions, and their morals.

The French philosophers, particularly Condorcet and others (among whom there were many men of a warm and genuine but visionary and romantic philanthropy), attempted to raise, as it were, the temperature of the popular mind above the region of prejudice by artificial expedients; but in the attempt they appear only to have replaced *old and harmless prejudices*, by *new and more destructive ones*. They did not restore health; but they wrought a pernicious change in the disease.

For a while the great jacobinical confederacy gave a new turn and an higher tone to public opinion—it imparted a sort of gigantic pace to the

dwarfish step of the enervated Gaul. But that confederacy was composed of too discordant elements to be lasting. Its system was too violent to stand. Its spirit was not a permanent flame, but a short-lived conflagration. It inspired energy; but it was an energy of an unnatural origin. It created strength; but it was not a healthy robustness;—it was the vigour of convulsions, the crisis of a fever. It was a great, a prodigious, an accumulated excitement; but which, when it ceases, and it has almost ceased, will leave the people in a state of lassitude and debility more congenial to vile subjection than honest independence; to the apathy of slavery, than to the animation and activity of freedom.

The French, at the commencement of their revolution, mistook the degree of liberty of which they were capable; to which they were fitted by their opinions, habits, morals; and the mistake has been fatal to their repose and destructive to their happiness. Had they been contented with a moderate share of liberty, they might have obtained it without a struggle;—without one act of pillage or

confiscation; without one tumultuary movement or one murderous tumult.

The king, whose character, whose intentions, whose benevolent and patriotic projects, long veiled with calumny by the malignity of faction, are now better known than they were in the early period of the revolution, appears to have been sincerely disposed to reform the abuses of the government, and would readily have resigned his arbitrary sway for a power defined by the laws, and controlled in its exercise, by the vigilant and wholesome jealousy of a free representation.

An executive power must be lodged in some part of every government. It is *essential* to public liberty; but, it must be confessed, that public liberty is always in some degree of danger from the ambition of those who are invested with its exercise. It is essential to public liberty, because that liberty itself depends on the due observance and execution of the laws; and it is dangerous to public liberty, because that lust of domination which invariably attends the exercise of power, is continually inter-

esting the executive in their infraction. That the executive power may be useful it is necessary that its operations should be free and unembarrassed; that its motions in cases of emergency may be quick, vigorous, and decisive; and that it may give uniformity, order, and harmony, to the complex movements of the political machine.

That the executive power may not be dangerous, it is necessary, that while its salutary energies are not impeded, various checks and obstructions should be established in order to prevent it from arrogating a power beyond the laws, and to serve its own ambitious purposes. A constant and unceasing, but well-tempered jealousy of the executive, is, therefore, the characteristic of a people that are free and are worthy of freedom. When a wakeful, irritative attention to the motions of the executive ceases, it is a sign that the flame of liberty is expiring. People cease to love liberty, when they cease to feel any apprehensions about the loss of it.

When a nation reposes a blind and unlimited confidence in the executive, or its ministers, it is a

melancholy indication that that nation is becoming ripe for slavery. It is a symptom of all independent principle decayed; of public spirit gone;—it is a token of degenerate apathy; and which tells those in power, in a language not to be mistaken, “We are ready to resign our liberties, and to crouch and fawn beneath the rod of despotism.”—Without a *moderate jealousy of the prerogative public liberty cannot be preserved; and with a violent, excessive, and unreasonable distrust of it, public liberty must be lost.*

When the French constituent assembly, after stripping the crown of its most splendid rays, had left it a scanty portion of power, and which was certainly not more than sufficient for the public welfare, they became reluctant to permit the king to exercise even the power which they had left him. They seemed anxious to render the executive nugatory and ridiculous. They thus relaxed all the springs and energies of the government; and they rendered it too feeble for the execution of the laws or for any vigorous exertion.—Wanting an efficacious principle of self preservation, it fell,

not like a giant in a mighty struggle, but like a worm, writhing in helpless agony.

Since the destruction of the kingly power the French have, with a strange levity and inconstancy, moulded the executive power into various shapes and combinations; none of which have yet been found favourable to the stability of a good government or to the interests of public liberty. One of their great errors has been in shivering the unity of the sceptre, and in dividing among several, what they ought to have condensed in the person of one. The investiture of the executive power in an individual tends to increase the utility of that power and to prevent its corruption. Where the executive is vested in an individual, it must first be considered, that that individual, having no competitors or rivals, will not be subject to those passions of envy and jealousy, which often cause the public interest to be sacrificed to personal resentment, or which make the individual, who is under their controul, more eager to humble a rival than to serve his country.

If the executive be not only vested in an individual, but if, farther, that individual be hereditary in his office, he is exempted still more from the operations of lurking rancour and malignant rivalry. He is not only exposed to the influence of motives which tend indirectly to prevent him from acting wrong, but to those also which tend directly to make him act right. His interest is so amalgamated with the public interest, that he cannot hurt the welfare of the community without endangering his own.

Next, he is placed in a lofty station of majesty, not weakened by division of power or refraction of splendour; and where personal pride and ambition are in a measure identified with an upright conduct and patriotic views.

Where the executive power is concentrated in the person of an individual, all factions are prevented in that quarter of the government where factions are ever most dangerous to the public welfare.—If you distribute the executive among five or six individuals you necessarily produce factions.

You split that power which should be distinguished by unity of action, sentiment, and interest, into so many divided sentiments and interests; which must be kept from a close and cordial approximation by the turbulent and devouring passions, which seem so natural to those towering heights of the political horizon, where faction gathers her darkest storms, and ambition delights in the whirlwind of destruction. Where the executive power is divided the personal interests of the different members will inevitably be opposite to those of each other; and, of course, to the public interest. It may be said, that, in multiplying the members of the executive, you increase the chance of wisdom; but you, at the same time, increase the chances of dissension; which must counteract all the advantages of accumulated talents. Wisdom, or great mental capacity, is necessary in the deliberative part of the government; but unity of action is more essential to the executive; and that unity of action must be endangered in almost an exact ratio to the division of the power or to the number of those to whom it is intrusted.

After having discussed the constituted, active, and official sovereignty of the government, let us return to consider the constituting but problematical sovereignty of the people.

It is plain, at first sight, that the sovereignty of the people, in its literal acceptation, is, in a large empire, a physical impossibility. Twenty-four millions of people can never deliberate in the same spot, nor act in unison for one moment of time.

The sovereignty of the people could never be supposed to mean, that every individual is sovereign; for, then, the terms would imply an end of all law and the abolition of all government. It can only mean that every individual or unit of the state is a fractional part of the sovereignty; of which the plenary exercise is vested not in one, but in the whole people. According to this construction, it means nothing; for the whole people never can exercise it; and if they could, on whom could it be exercised? It is absurd to talk of a sovereign without a subject; and, if the whole people be sovereign, who are the subjects? The answer would, I suppose,

be, the whole people; that is, all are the subjects of all, and the sovereigns of all.

It seems plain, that, when the sovereignty of the people is mentioned in a practicable, intelligible, and definite sense, it must mean a delegated sovereignty. The people may have a power to delegate a sovereignty, though they cannot exercise it themselves, but by the medium of delegation. Thus "the sovereignty of the people" means, that the power which upholds, and, in fact, constitutes the strength of the government, is essentially and physically resident in the great mass of the people; but who, not being able, of themselves, to bring this power into any simultaneous action, or to make it subservient to the protection of the state and to the several great ends of social and political economy, *have devolved the right of doing it on others.* They forego the impracticable right of universal sovereignty, that they may enjoy the practical benefits of universal subjection. *The sovereignty of all is delegated to a few.*

If, therefore, by the sovereignty of the people, we

are to understand the sovereignty of the government, as emanating from the people, or as upheld by their consent, as deriving its stability from their support, if not owing its original existence to their choice, the phraseology which honours the government at least as much as it flatters the people, appears to be only an innocuous sound; and I am surprised why it should expose those who have toasted it in a convivial bumper to the malevolent hissing of party-rage.

It cannot be denied but that all governments, whether they be free or despotic, owe their strength and their security to the consent of the people. If they did not originate from their choice, they must be maintained by their consent. For no government can long stand, if the people will its destruction. Their will, therefore, is sovereign; and is the real and essential base of all political sovereignty.

A government may indeed reign by military power without the consent and against the will of the people; but such a reign must be transient;

for popular affection alone can secure a permanent dominion.

The French monarchy would never have stood for so many centuries if it had not been radically established in the hearts of the people.—When the popular affection changed, its glory soon faded away, and it vanished like a vision of the night.—Even a large military force could not shield it from destruction or avert its fall. The soldiers caught the flame of freedom; and, through the whole course of the revolution, they have manifested the genuine ardour of patriotic affection.

Governments are instituted for the good of the people. I do not pretend to say that all governments were expressly fabricated for that purpose. Most governments have arisen out of circumstances. They have often been the creation of chance or of folly, rather than of design; the usurpations of ambition, rather than the voluntary delegations of power.—When, then, I say that governments are instituted for the good of the people, I consider the question abstractedly, without any relation what-

ever to the original of any existing government. If governments be not instituted for the good of the people, for whose good are they instituted!—Are they designed for the exclusive good of the governors? Are the people mere beasts of burden? Are they felons sentenced to transportation or negroes transported into slavery? Are they to be oppressed and not to complain,—to be whipt and scourged and pillaged, and to have no redress? Are these the causes or the ends of political institutions? Surely not. The great and glorious end of all human policy can reasonably be no other than the good of those who are the objects of its administration. Governments may be despotic by practice, but they are never so by right. They may reign for themselves, and not for the people; but the governors, who, instead of being protectors, are the lawless violators of protection, who, instead of being the guardians of justice, are the perpetrators of injustice, pass the limits of their authority; and though the people may patiently tolerate, they never voluntarily endure such an usurpation. They may crouch under it from the suggestions of prudence, but they do not cling to it with the warm rapture

of affection ; and their fullen patience only lasts till they can gather strength for its subversion. All governments are subject to the decrees, and ought to be obsequious to the controul, of the great moral law. The moral law, which comprehends all the modifications and ramifications of social duty, was ordained by God before the foundation of the world. It is that law which seems to be coeval with the first emanations of intelligence, and prior to the order of angel or seraphin.—It is this law which is the only solid and permanent base of the social order, wherever it exists, and without an intimate incorporation of whose divine elements, the fabric of civil society is only an heap of crumbling dust. It is this law, which, blending its sanctifying influence with the spirit of social and political institutions, restrains violence and wrong ; which is the safeguard of life and property, which augments happiness by the sensation of security, and which tends to compress and identify all the disjointed parts and divided interests of mankind with bands firmer and less perishable than cramps of iron. It is this law which gives to the social order an indissoluble principle of stability ; and, without a direct partici-

pation of whose sacred energies, every civil government, whatever name it may assume, or into whatever specious forms it may be distributed, is only an unjust, oppressive, and impious tyranny. It may seem, as the French republic once seemed, a Colossus of brass, while it was only a pillar of sand.

Of the moral law, the divine providence of the Almighty superintends the agency and maintains the stability by a wonderful and certain action, interaction, and reaction, of cause and effect, so that punishment always, sooner or later, follows its violation. Injustice, whether it be the injustice of a man or of a nation, is never associated with a vigorous and healthy prosperity. It may look green for a while, but it will wither in the end from the certain operation of its own internal weakness. It is like the florid blush on the cheek of the consumptive. There is a false gleam of health, but the vitals are decayed.

Though the Almighty has dispensed to man a portion of free agency, yet he often interferes to control its use, to modify its operations, and to pre-

vent the mischief, that would ensue from the unrestrained totality of its aberrations in the vast republic of mankind. Thus the nefarious violators of the eternal law of moral obligation, are, to use a scripture expression, only set in slippery places; and at last rolled into the gulph of ignominy and destruction. The course of the natural world is permanently regular, because it is continually under the controul of laws appointed for its government; and which laws are not suffered to be counteracted by the arbitrary intervention of any subordinate agency. The planets roll on from age to age, with perfect harmony, in the line of their orbits. The moral world would move in the circumference of its orbit, which is the moral law or the will of God, with the same invariable uniformity, if, for wise purposes, and, in order to prevent intelligence from being governed like mechanism, it were not suffered to be disturbed and driven from its right direction into a devious and eccentric course by the passions of mankind. The operations of the moral law cease to be regular and uniform when it comes into contact with the free agency of an intelligent creation.

The moral system is therefore necessarily subject to many agitations, from the complexity and diversity and frequent interruption of its movements; but the great Eternal, by the good and wise interventions of his providence, calms the turbulence and disperses the storms of the moral atmosphere, often bringing good out of evil, and turning darkness into light.

If there be a moral law, and if that law be such as I have stated it, governors as well as the governed must be subject to its decrees; and the government which wantonly transgresses them, is itself guilty of rebellion against a superior sovereignty, a legitimate and sacred authority, whose golden sceptre ought to sway the world. A government that tramples on justice, that prodigally ravages the property or wantonly spills the blood of its subjects, ought to be considered as exercising not a lawful but a lawless power. Such a government has by its oppressive tyranny forfeited its claims to obedience. It has torn asunder by its sanguinary mandates the chords of popular affection; it has excommunicated

the people from the duty of obedience, and itself from the right of subjection.

It has not been sufficiently considered, and I am therefore anxious to impress on my reader this highly important truth, that all governments, though rulers in one sense, are subjects in another. They are sovereigns to rule; but they have a sovereign to obey. They are amenable to the great and everlasting statutes of moral obligation; and, when they dare to outrage these, they provoke the indignation of Heaven, and deserve the execrations of mankind. If governors themselves be subject to the moral law, as who will be hardy enough to deny?—then it must follow that they ought to exercise their power for the good of the people, and that the public good is the end of political institutions.

No government can neglect the interest or waste the happiness of the people, without sinning against the sanctions of justice and humanity. No government can, at the same time, obey the moral law

and violate the rights of the people ; or, contrariwise, no government can violate the rights of the people without infringing on the eternal decrees of moral obligation. Those who have denied the sovereignty of the people have considered government as a divine institution. But it appears to me that the only government which can truly boast a divine original, is the government of the moral law ; which was prior in time, and is superior in sanctity, to any civil institutions. Were all men obedient to that law, the very necessity of government would be superseded by an universal respect for justice.

Political institutions are inferior in importance and subordinate in authority to the eternal sovereignty of moral obligation ; and can only be considered as artificial but necessary expedients for maintaining its immutable decrees and enforcing their general observance. Those governors who pretend to exercise their power by divine right, should consider that their power is only a human institution, but *intended to protect an institution that is divine.*

Moral obligation, considered with a view to government, is a regard for the general good; and the general good is made up of the particular good of all the component individuals of the state; and which particular good consists in the security of the life and property of each individual. To say that government ought to be subservient to moral purposes, is to say that its policy ought to be directed to the public good. Moral obligation and general utility are synonymous with respect to the conduct of those who are invested with the sceptre of nations. As long as the spirit of justice pervades and animates the measures of any government; as long as that government directs its counsels by the great principles of morality, *it may be considered as the viceroy of heaven, and it is rebellion against God himself to insult its authority or to resist its ordinances.* But when that government, in defiance of its duty, becomes the oppressor of the people; when to serve its own ambitious and interested views, it becomes forgetful of their happiness and careless of their protection,—a murderer spilling their blood or a robber seizing their property, it forfeits its sacred

claim to obedience, and becomes an unjust and sacrilegious usurpation.

The power of government is a power in trust; and is designed for the good of the people. When the power is abused, when it is exerted for purposes diametrically opposite to those for which it was designed, the trust is violated; the tenure is broken, and the right of possession is lost. The condition of the trust and the covenant of the possession are *obedience to the divine law*; and, though God may not openly interfere to punish its infraction, yet he has so disposed the invisible but irresistible action of moral causes, that it always is sooner or later punished; and those are usually made the instruments of the punishment who have been the sufferers by the offence.

Despotic and immoral governments are abandoned to the wrath of the people over whom they tyrannised. In vain do such governments call for loyalty, when they despise morality; for, living without law, they perish without law, and come to an untimely end. The rulers of nations are too prone to imagine that the

power which they possess, is intended for their own personal convenience and advantage; without considering that they are intrusted with a power for protection, not for oppression; for preservation, not for destruction. When cruelty and injustice are the characteristics of their reign, they sin against their allegiance to the moral sovereign of the world; and the people, who in the agonies of despair, rise against their wicked oppressors, only vindicate their own rights in his offended majesty. They assert the cause of violated justice, of weeping humanity, and of laws, which have a higher descent, and demand a greater reverence, than any conventional or transient obligations.

Morality and policy have been too long disjoined; but neither can the subject enjoy a security from oppression, nor can, nor will, nor ought governments to enjoy security from insurrection till they are united. The atrocities of the French in the successive periods of the revolution, have arisen from the great and general defection of the people from the everlasting statutes of moral obligation. Cruelty and injustice were the distinguishing fea-

tures of all their proceedings. They invaded the sanctuary of private property, as if industry were designed to accumulate for rapine, and they shed blood, as if they were cased in steel against the common sympathies of humanity; as if murder, instead of being a crime, were the test of patriotic virtue. For many months, while the revolutionary tribunal kept sending its hecatombs to the guillotine, the French were rather frozen with apathy, than melted with commiseration.—The gay and volatile and sensual Parisians even exulted in this carnival of human slaughter. They feasted their eyes on the expiring victims, and went home only to return with more impatience to the renewal of the tragedy.

What a picture did Paris present during the sanguinary reign of Robespierre!!! A city in the very zenith of civilization, where literature and the arts, which are said to polish the manners and soften the heart, had attained the highest pitch of cultivation and improvement, where Philosophy had fixed her throne, issuing decrees of universal benevolence, and inviting nations to turn their swords

into ploughshares,—this renowned city, at this apparently auspicious period, displayed a ferocity more revolting than ever characterised the darkest ages or the most savage people !!!

We have seen savages, by a slow and gradual amelioration, become civilized ; but the French revolution brings us acquainted with the extraordinary phænomenon of a civilized people, as it were, by a sudden and instantaneous conversion, becoming savage. It sets before us a people, sensible to an excess of sensibility, delighting in the office of the executioner.

The wild beast of the forest, when not pressed with hunger, will pass by his victim ; he is cruel no longer than while his appetite lasts : but the refined, the delicate, the voluptuous Parisians, who would shed abundance of tears at a recital of fictitious sorrow, wantonly drenched their streets in human gore, insulted the dying, and mangled the dead. Some have attributed the unnatural ferocity, that has marked the excesses of the revolution, to the apathy occasioned by the oppressions of the

former government, to the freezing touch of despotism, debasing the affections and hardening the heart. But I do not assent to this inference. I allow the effect, but I deny the justness of the cause, to which it is imputed.

Great oppression will, indeed, fear and wither the fresh and pliant sensibility of its victims; it absorbs the sympathies of humanity in the emotions of vindictiveness; and, by stifling all sensations of tenderness, it generates those of cruelty. And thus it comes to pass, that, when the galling bands of oppression are broken, the injuries of the oppressed react on the oppressor.

But the government of France, previous to the revolution, was not a tyranny which crushes the subject by the weight of its chains; it did not resemble an eastern despotism, which, like the pestilence, causes silence and mourning in the streets, and banishes the smile of security from the countenance. Monarchical France exhibited the cheerfulness of liberty rather than the gloom of slavery.

The cheerfulness of the French, under the old government, though aided by the vivacity of their character and by the natural irritability of their physical temperament, must have been, in a great measure, caused by the conscious sentiment of their political security. That security is a sensation, which we in vain desire to feel, and whose pleasureable influence we in vain desire to see, in a despotic state.

Insecurity naturally produces gloominess and suspicion; and which have a strong tendency to produce hardness of heart. The emotions of gaiety, void of apprehension, and the sallies of free, unre-served communication, expand and cherish and vivify all the humane affections. But, where the government is really oppressive, where tyranny is displayed in arbitrary exactions, in capricious acts of cruelty, and in all the multiform vexations of injustice, that gloominess and suspicion, which I have mentioned, are increased to a degree, which we, who live in a free country, can hardly conceive. They render the heart torpid and congealed; and

almost impervious to the exhilarating flame of one benevolent sensation. The old government of France (which was, nominally, a despotism, but whose chilling power yielded to the lenient touch of custom and civilization), whose spirit was mild and beneficent, and whose operations were more auspicious to the production of tenderness than cruelty, of kind philanthropy than of unrelenting barbarity, cannot, I think, be justly charged with brutalising the character of the people and predisposing them to the excesses of the revolution. What then were the causes of those excesses? First, they were produced by that violent conflict of passions and fermentation of evil humours, which, necessarily, attended the subversion of an ancient government, whose influence was so widely diffused, and which were, at the same time, inflamed to a tenfold rage by the envy of rivalry, the jealousy of faction, and the lust of power.—But yet there does appear to have existed, anterior to the revolution, a predisposing tendency to the excesses which have disgraced it. The concussion of interests, the conflict of passions excited by the revolutionary hurricane, were the immediate occasion

of these excesses; but the remote and original cause existed anterior to the revolution.—What was *that cause*? On serious inquiry, it appears to me to have been the gross neglect of the clergy in teaching the people the great duties of justice and humanity, and the sacred principles of moral obligation. They instructed them in the vain formalities of devotion; but they did not enlighten their minds or soften their hearts with practical and beneficent christianity. When, therefore, the tempest of the revolution came, the people, destitute of morals, wanted that which alone could restrain their rage, moderate their passions, and abate their cruelty. Had the people been carefully impressed with the supreme and eternal necessity of moral action; had those sympathies which connect man with man and with all sentient nature, been excited in their breasts, the history of the revolution would not have had to record so many foul and atrocious deeds of injustice and inhumanity. But, wanting moral habits, and not associating the practice of honesty or benevolence with the sanctions of christianity, the people of France were predisposed to fanaticism; or to that tumultuous, unmanageable state of mind, which prefers the wild ecstasies

of imagination, or the raving orgasms of passion, to the social duties.

The fanatics of the revolution were actuated by a spirit similar to that which produced the massacre of St. Bartholomew ; and which would never have happened if the Romish priests had taught the charities of the gospel, instead of breathing into their disciples the unchristian, nay, the hellish, spirit of intolerance.

Fanaticism, whether religious or political (for all kinds of fanaticism are nearly allied), is easily excited, where just, precise, and definite notions of moral obligation are wanting to counteract the poison. Good and enlightened morals protect the soul from the noxious vapours of bigotry and superstition. The want of such morals paved the way for the crimes of the revolution, and for the injustice and cruelty which have marked every step of its progress. Those crimes, that injustice, and that cruelty, are, therefore, remotely, attributable to the French clergy, who taught the people to consider

superstitious observances as more meritorious than the observance of the great moral law; and who thus prepared their hearts for the deliberation, and their hands for the perpetration, of every iniquity.

I have little doubt but that those who planned, and those who executed, the massacre of St. Bartholomew, were conscientious bigots, who thought that they were paying an agreeable homage to the Almighty. In the same manner charity leads me to suppose, that *many* of the revolutionary zealots, inspired with the fumes of fanaticism, and having no sound notions of moral rectitude to direct their actions, or govern their conscience, imagined that they were doing right while they were offering hundreds of bleeding corpses on the shrine of a delusive patriotism.

The crimes of the French revolution plainly indicate to all governments the supreme necessity of impressing on their subjects (and particularly at that period when impressions are lasting) the important truths of moral obligation;—truths made awfully interesting by the christian sanctions.

Religious forms, except as far as they are associated with a moral influence, or give a bias to practical justice and humanity, are superfluous, and even pernicious ; for they contribute only to inspire the flame of fanaticism, which is destructive in whatever bosom it is kindled, or to whatever purpose it is applied.

Were the youth of nations carefully *trained to moral habits*, and attentively impressed with just and distinct notions of moral obligation, revolutions would neither be provoked by the government, nor desired by the people ; and, if ever they did occur, they would wear the aspect of gentleness rather than ferocity. Their changes would be tranquil and calm ; directed by justice, and associated with clemency, there would be no licentious pillage of property, no wanton spilling of blood.—Hear this, ye who wield the sceptres of power, and know that your glory, your happiness, your safety, consist in supporting the plain and rational teachers of christian morality ; and in discouraging the ranting and senseless advocates of that mystic theology, which

prefers the vain ceremonials of devotion before the weightier matters of justice and humanity !

The people of France were not instructed in the christian system. They were steeped in unchristian prejudices, and destitute of christian knowledge. They were initiated in bigotry ; but *they were not warmed by the benevolence, or purified by the morality, of the gospel.* Hence they were so readily induced to throw off all religious restraints ; and their minds, already disposed by the weakness of credulity, or the blindness of ignorance, to the effervescence of enthusiasm, were easily sublimed into a vindictive frenzy against the altars of their worship.

The moral character of the French people seems to have been greatly affected by the corruptions of the clergy. The clergy, forgetful of their high calling, were greedy of worldly parade, and absorbed in worldly pursuits. They were ambitious, intriguing, venal ; and their conduct was diametrically opposite to the simplicity, the disinterestedness, and holiness of christian ministers. They

were profuse, but they were not beneficent; their devotion appeared showy hypocrisy, and their piety pompous insincerity. Their manners, instead of being pure, were sensual; and the faith of thousands was shaken by the scandal of their debaucheries. The impurity of their thoughts was engraved in the obscenity of their diction; and *some few* among them were more fit to minister in the voluptuous orgies of a heathen divinity than to offer the fragrant incense of grateful adoration at the shrine of the holy Jesus. Infidelity had powerful votaries at the very footstool of the altar. Even several who had been lifted to the chair of episcopal authority, and who ought to have been great and shining testimonies of faith and piety, derided revelation as a fable; and wanted even shame to veil the grossness of their own imposture.

Such was the loathsome degradation of the French clergy; and *such have been the distinguishing features of ecclesiastics in all countries, wherever pure christianity has been buried under the corruptions of popery.*

The corruptions of doctrine in the church of France, combined with the dissolute lives, the profligacy, the hypocrisy, of the clergy, were, as I have already stated in my Picture of Christian Philosophy (2d edit. 260), the cause of that universal apostacy from the christian faith, which has been so singular and characteristic a feature in the French revolution. They were the egg that produced the serpent. By a certain providential instrumentality, which is so apparent in the world, and which so often constitutes wickedness its own destroyer, the church of France was subverted by the children whom she had nursed in her bosom, and fed with her richest dainties. Infidelity was engendered by the malignant and envenomed sperm of popery; and popery has, at last, been crushed by its unnatural progeny. Instead of the mother devouring the young, the young have devoured the mother.

From this field of discussion, in which our attention has been engaged by the present and the past condition of a neighbouring country, let us return nearer home, to consider some topics which

are interesting and important. I approve the plan of ecclesiastical reform, which has been proposed by a great authority, with a highly praise-worthy and christian moderation *, and I am the more pleased with it, because it would perform much public benefit without any private injury. I agree with this considerate reformer that the ridiculous farce of electing bishops by a “conge d’elire” ought to be abolished; that no one should be made a bishop till he was forty years old, and not then, unless he had officiated as a parish priest for at least ten years;—that the revenues of the poorer bishoprics should be increased by the annexation of other preferments that might conveniently be added to them; that the great tythes annexed to the bishoprics, or belonging to the prebends and deaneries, should, *at the death of their present possessors*, be restored to the vicarages to which they originally be-

* In a pamphlet called, *The Moderate Reformer; or, a Proposal for abolishing some of the most obvious and gross Abuses that have crept into the Church of England, and are the Occasion of frequent Complaint against it.* By a Friend to the Church of England. 8vo. White, Fleet Street.—The modesty of the author of this pamphlet has caused him to suppress his name; and I am not at liberty to mention it, or it would, I am convinced, give the sanction of a venerable authority to the cause which I have espoused.

longed; that no pluralities should, *in future*, be permitted: to these regulations I give my cordial suffrage; and I hardly see who can withhold his, when they are intended only as amendments for the future, and are not a vindictive and cruel retribution for the past.

Perhaps it might be thought hard, that, as many livings are so small, no clergyman should, in any circumstances, be allowed to hold more than one. But the unequal distribution of ecclesiastical property is, I think, no more a subject for regret, nor capable of prevention, than the unequal distribution of property in any other profession.

Every clergyman ought to have a fair chance of being preferred from a smaller to a larger living; from a scanty to a more comfortable subsistence; and with this chance he ought to be contented.

It were to be wished (but, perhaps, in the present state of things, more to be wished than hoped for) that, *in no case whatever*, the revenues attached to the sacred ministry, should be so great as to tempt

needy and unprincipled persons to enter into it for the sole sake of its emoluments.

Motives of emolument often operate on the christian teacher more powerfully than motives of conscience ; and this must continue while the great and dazzling patronage of the church gives so strong a bias to the frailty of human inclination.

After all the spoliations of the voluptuous and unfeeling tyrant (Henry VIII.) ; after all the largesses to the panders of his lust, or the abettors of his cruelty, the church of England has sufficient reason to remember with gratitude the piety of his forbearance ; and, perhaps, it would have been more conducive to the real interests of religion, if, *in some* few instances, his exactions had been greater, or his scruples less.

It may suit the imposing genius of pagan adoration, to rear his gorgeous forehead “ with gems and golden lustre rich emblazoned ;” but the showy vanity, of much exterior decoration, or the blaze of transient splendour, do not appear to me to accord

so well with the humbler system of the humble Jesus.

The clergy ought to have a decent maintenance ; and those who are more favoured by fortune should consider that wealth gives them no right to indulge in luxury, or to put on the gaudy trappings of worldly ostentation. Their superfluous wealth is the patrimony of the poor. They ought to teach charity, by being the patterns of its exercise ; and they should aspire to imitate their great master, who lived not for himself, but lived and died for the happiness of others.

There is a custom, which, of late years, has grown very prevalent, and almost universal ; I mean a sort of Smithfield traffic in that property which our laws have appropriated to sacred uses. It appears to have been the intention of the authors of our reformed establishment, that no sale whatever of ecclesiastical property should be permitted. The fortieth canon says, that, " Buying and selling of spiritual and ecclesiastical functions, offices, promotions, dignities, and *livings*, is execrable before

GOD." If this remark be just (which I once doubted, but which, on maturer consideration, I hardly know how to contest), then, I think, that no law ought, *under any circumstances, to tolerate a traffic which is execrable before God.*

He who takes a living, takes upon his conscience the care of souls; the eternal welfare of hundreds may be at stake, on the discretion, the zeal, the sincerity, and blamelessness of his ministry; but what care can he be expected to take of this weighty charge, who has obtained it by a sordid bargain, and has bought the care of a church on the same principle that he would have purchased the good will of a public house?

In the sale of ecclesiastical property, the instruction of the people, which is the important end for which that property was granted, and of which *the actual performance seems to constitute the only just condition of its tenure*, is not thought of; the quantity of pecuniary emolument is alone considered.

Livings are put up to auction, and publicly ad-

vertified, as if they had not the slightest connexion with any sacred or moral uses; as if they were merely refectories for sensual gratification, or asylums for pleasurable indolence.

Thus, for instance, how often do we see the public prints proclaiming, to the great disgrace of the clergy, "A living to be sold in a good sporting country;" or, "A living to be sold where there is fine shooting, and a pack of hounds kept in the neighbourhood."

No advertisements run in this manner: "A living to be sold in a parish where the people are immersed in heathen ignorance, where the sabbath is profaned, where children at the breast lisp oaths with the first efforts of articulation, where many of the inhabitants are professed unbelievers in revelation, and where those who profess to believe it, give the lie to their professions by the scandalous immorality of their conduct." Such an advertisement, which ought to attract the apostle of Jesus, which ought to kindle his zeal, and make him bid higher for so glorious an opportunity of doing

good, of propagating the truth, and retrieving the scandal of the gospel, would probably either repel the purchaser, or make him use it as an argument to depreciate the value of the purchase.—To induce the apostles of modern times to bid high for the patrimony of the altar, to excite their impatience and inflame their holy zeal, we must call in the scent of the pointer and the tally-ho of the hunter. O conscience, where is thy sting! O shame, where is thy blush!

Religion has degenerated into a mere article of stock-jobbing traffic; and, if Christ were now to come upon earth, it would, for a considerable time, find him full employment to drive the buyers and sellers out of the temple.

What would probably contribute more, than any thing else, to the honour, the security, and the real interests of the *establishment*, and to replenish a waning priesthood with able and conscientious members, would be an erasure of the few obnoxious parts of our otherwise excellent liturgy, and a judicious, temperate, and well-considered alteration of the

thirty-nine articles. Where articles of religion contain nothing but the plain, simple, unsophisticated doctrines of scripture, and which he who runs may read, they cannot be pernicious, and they may be useful;—if they contain any thing more, they cannot be useful, and they may be pernicious.

It seems the height of presumption to require any persons to acknowledge as undoubted truths any propositions which are dubious, and on which conscientious inquirers may entertain different opinions. To make this demand, seems an assumption of power more suited to those who sat in the chair of St. Peter, trampling on the rights of conscience, spilling the blood of innocence, and venting the decrees of crafty imposture, or bigoted ignorance, as the unerring oracles of God, than to the less aspiring votaries of a protestant church.

Our articles very wisely confess that “whatsoever is not read therein (in holy scripture), nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought necessary to salvation.” Art. vi.—

Art. xx. says, that “ it is not lawful for the church to ordain any thing contrary to God’s word written.” But it may be questioned whether articles of religion, which are the work of fallible men, and which put a particular, specific construction on certain doctrines, which admit of different constructions, and which assert *that construction to be the only true and saving sense*, and which consequently judge all those, who, from conscience sake, adopt a different interpretation ;—I say, that it may be questioned, whether such articles do not breathe a spirit of intolerance opposite to the mild forbearance of the gospel, and whether the persons by whom they were enacted, have not exceeded their powers, and demanded a more absolute subjection than they had a right to claim.

Articles of religion, which are the composition of men liable to prejudices and errors, are not always the best interpreters of scripture : but the scripture is always the best interpreter of itself ; and therefore those who believe the truth of the christian revelation, ought not to be required by pains and penalties to make their construction of its more myste-

rious doctrines tally with the dogmas of any particular individuals. Ought not individuals, *in controverted points of doctrine, and which cannot be essential to salvation, because they are dubious*, to be left to their own discretion?—ought they to be fettered by the tenets of any human authority?—Articles of religion which pretend to fix and define dark and subtle, and, as it were, illusory and volatile questions in divinity, such as predestination, election, &c. &c. about which the wisest and the best theologians have always differed, may possibly and probably be false; and I do not see on what grounds any church can demand its members to subscribe to a possible and probable falsehood, as an undoubted truth. There are many points in gospel-theology, in which it is impossible for fallible men to draw the precise line of separation between heterodoxy and orthodoxy; and, therefore, I think it would have been better if those great and good men, who reformed our church, had not attempted it. And, even supposing that such an attempt was necessary in that age, when the papal usurpation was first renounced, and when such wild and dissonant notions prevailed on religious-topics, yet I think, that the

compass of the decrees which they left us, to steer our course right in the tempestuous sea of controversial theology, might now safely be abandoned for a compass of a diviner original;—I mean the directions of Christ and his apostles, which are better and more generally understood in our age than they were in theirs.

Much irritation has been occasioned by, and many objections have been made to, the provision which the law has ordained for the maintenance of the clergy; but I agree in opinion with the moderate reformer, whom I have mentioned above, that tythes are the least oppressive, and, with all their exceptions, the least exceptionable mode in which that provision can be made,

It will perhaps be thought, that in defending tythes I am biased either by an existing interest or an interest in expectation. But I trust, that the reader of this work will immediately acknowledge it as the exertion of an independent mind; a mind lifted above the baseness of mercenary views.

As far as my own personal interest is concerned,

I am perfectly indifferent either to the continuance or the abolition of tythes. I have not a right, at this moment, to a single particle of corn or of any other produce in the aggregate tythe of the kingdom; and I would disdain to accept such a property, if I were certain that it would operate to the injury of my fellow-creatures.

Much clamour has, at all times, been raised against tythes; but I have long thought that clamour to originate in most instances from interested selfishness, factious turbulence, infidel rage, or sectarian bitterness, rather than from the calm and deliberate conviction of their injustice or their impolicy. Tythes are not the exaction of injustice. He who purchases a piece of land subject to tythes, purchases it knowing that the tenth part not only of the existing produce, but of the productive power, of the improved or improveable value, belongs of right to a different proprietor; and he, consequently, pays so much less for the purchase than he would otherwise pay. With what show of justice can such a purchaser complain of a grievance for which he has, in fact, previously received a recompence? For, had he purchased the land free from

tythes, he would have given a much larger price for it, and proportioned to the value of the impost to which it is subject. Surely that can hardly be esteemed an oppression, which is a voluntary act; or an injustice which a man sanctions by his own consent.

It should likewise be considered (for truth, more than any undue partiality to my brethren, compels me to declare it) that the clergy, either from an unwillingness to incur the charge of extortion or of covetousness, or from a desire to live at peace with their parishioners, *seldom* get more than two-thirds of their due, according to the rent of the land. He, therefore, who hires land subject to tythes, is usually a great gainer, and is very materially benefited by that measure in which his ignorance finds a source of bitter discontent. For, hiring his land subject to tythes, he has a *deduction from the rent*, which he *would otherwise pay, equal to the full value of the tythes*, when, in fact, he seldom pays any thing like *that value*. If he did not pay the smaller sum in tythe, he would pay the larger sum in rent. Where therefore the clergy-

man is not griping, penurious, and eager to exact the uttermost farthing, tythes are to the tenant not an intolerable grievance, *but an essential advantage.*

It must be allowed, however, that where *tythes are taken in kind* (though I can hardly call them an injustice when lands are bought and sold subject to such a contingency) they are a material hardship. They are a tax on improvement, and a serious and alarming defalcation from the productive power of the land. They impoverish the soil, and waste its strength faster than the most vigorous exertions of industry can repair it. Take an instance; suppose 100 acres of land in tillage, and the tythe of it taken in kind. In this case, it is plain, that the tenth part of the produce will be annually carried off the soil, without making any return to it again. The estate therefore will annually receive a tenth part of the manure less than it ought to receive, in order to enable it to maintain its fertility. Should this deduction continue for ten years, it follows, that the estate, being deprived every year of one tenth of its renovating power, will, at the end of that period, have sustained an

injury which it would take the accumulated manure of a whole year's produce to repair. Suppose the tythe to have been taken in kind for seventy years, the land would, at the expiration of that term, have suffered a loss in its productive energies, which it would take not only the accumulated value, but the accumulating power, of seven years manure to retrieve. It follows from this statement, which I have endeavoured to make as clear as possible, that tythes, *where they are taken in kind*, are not only a tax on improvement, but that they do tend to stop all improvement, and, at last, utterly to exhaust the soil, and to reduce a fertile farm into a barren waste. It seldom indeed happens, perhaps less often than in one instance out of thirty, that tythes are taken in kind. This is another, among many instances which might be enumerated, where the harsh, the rugged, and ferocious aspect of positive law is smoothed into mildness by the lenient touch of custom, and the sympathies of humanity. The law of tythes is oppressive in its letter, but it is, *for the most part*, gentle and kind in its spirit, and even highly salutary in its actual operations. It is like that

French despotism of which I have before spoken, and whose horrid front was softened by the bland influence of custom and the high polish of civilization.

But, as it must be acknowledged, that tythes are sometimes taken in kind, that clergymen, like other people, forgetting the beneficent disposition of their master, will sometimes exact the uttermost farthing, and as, where these cases do occur, individuals are exposed to the most grievous oppression, I wish that a law was passed to prevent these occasional vexations, and to compel both the clerical incumbent and the lay impropriator to *accept a fair and reasonable composition* *; and which should be determined by competent arbiters (one to be chosen by each party), and who, in case of dispute, should call in a third, whose decision should be final. This composition, which should be proportioned as near as possible to the land to be tythed, should be subject to continue in force for any period, not less than three nor more than seven years.—Such a

* N. B. Not commutation.

law would take away all reasonable occasion of cavil; and would at the same time be a great alleviation to the distress of particular individuals. It would indeed be highly advantageous, and very acceptable to the clergy themselves. For it usually happens, that the farmer is more obstinate than the clergyman is greedy; that the farmer will not submit to any composition, *however equitable*, and will force the latter to draw his tythe even against his inclination.

Various other modes of providing for the clergy have been suggested; but what provision can be made for them liable to so few exceptions? And what exceptions could be taken to tythes, if that regulation which I have proposed were adopted?

I know, that there are many, who not only consider tythes as a grievance, but who deem a religious establishment an usurpation on the rights of conscience, and an undue preference given to the professors of a particular set of doctrines. I can not agree with such persons. I would, indeed, willingly promote some few alterations in our

liturgy and a reformation of our articles, I would willingly lay the emoluments of our church open to all *conscientious and learned persons*, who would sincerely assent to these propositions—"that the bible contained a divine revelation ; that that Jesus, whose history is recorded by the evangelists, is *the Christ*, the Messiah foretold by the prophets ; and that *a holy life is the great and essential CONDITION of salvation**."—Though I would warmly espouse, and cheerfully acquiesce in these *changes, which would be highly propitious to the interests of vital*

* It would, I think, be an enlightened and truly evangelical policy, so to model and temper the articles as to enlarge the pale of the church of England, and to make it so comprehensive as to merit the more glorious name of *the church of Christ*.—The Church of England, which is, *at present*, one of the purest of the reformed churches, would then be a bright and *spotless* luminary, attracting the homage of nations and the admiration of the world.—Were the church of England thus constituted, all dissensions would probably vanish, and religious peace and christian love, if banished from the rest of the world, would find an asylum *here*.—*Here* the gospel would flourish ; *here* bigotry would be extinguished, and nothing but evangelical concord would prevail.—With what delicious ecstasies does this prospect gladden my heart !—The time-serving divine, and the cold, phlegmatic, insensate politician, will perhaps tell me, with a sneer, that these ecstasies are illusions ; and so they may be : but they are delightful ones ; and I would rather be the master of such illusions, than the lord of thousands.

christianity, and which would infuse a salubrious portion of genuine zeal into our ministry ; *yet I would by no means consent to the destruction of an establishment, which, with all its imperfections, with all its real or supposed corruptions in doctrine or in practice, is a most venerable fabric, deserving our reverence, our homage, and our admiration.*

The common objection to religious establishments is, that, as the kingdom of Christ is not of this world, his religion ought not to be erected into a system of temporal policy, and shored up with the vain buttresses of worldly pomp and greatness ; that it is debasing christianity to turn it into an engine of state, and to make it subservient to views of secular pride and transient domination. There is much truth in these objections ; but it should be considered that the greater part of the people, even in this country, are yet sunk in the depths of almost heathen ignorance ; and that it is the duty of the government to appoint regular teachers for their instruction in points so important as morality and religion to their good conduct as members of civil

society, and to their future welfare. That government betrays its trust, and violates one of its most sacred obligations, which does not use every means in its power to enlighten its subjects in the knowledge, and to persuade them to the practice of the moral law, that they may be the less liable to transgress the laws of their country. The moral law is the sanctifying bond of all our social relations; it is the immoveable arch of every political edifice, and on which the wisest policy will lay the greatest pressure. The most peaceable citizens will always be found to be those who are the best instructed in the duty of moral obligation, and in whom, by the salutary precautions of the government, this *all-important prepossession has been excited and cherished from the earliest period, that the present morality of their actions has not only temporal but eternal relations.*

It must be confessed that these great ends are not obtained in their full or practicable extent by the established church. It must be confessed that the clergy are sometimes criminally remiss in their ministry; and that, where they have zeal, it is

often a zeal of a visionary cast, rendered useless, or even pernicious, *by an irrational application* ; but the question is not, whether the system of the establishment be filled with abuses, or incorporated with imperfections ; but whether, with all its *defects*, it *be not productive of advantages which could not be produced without it.* Were there no religious establishment, would the sum of national virtue be increased, or of national vice be diminished ? I believe that none would answer these questions in the affirmative who have calmly considered this most important subject, and who have taken not a narrow or prejudiced, but a fair, an impartial, and comprehensive survey of the actual condition of civil society, and of the present state of morals in this country.

Were there no establishment, a violent and furious religious ferment (the most dangerous of all kinds of fermentation) would pervade the country. Every village would, for a long season at least, be the scene of contention and strife. Each sect would be struggling to be uppermost, and to number the longest list of proselytes. The people would be

continually agitated by discussions of controversial divinity. Each sect would endeavour to propagate its opinions, and spread its influence at the expence of the rest.—Controversial divinity is mischievous, as it confines the attention to minute and trivial considerations; and withdraws it from those weightier matters, which are of universal obligation.

An established church contributes to preserve harmony among its own members, and among the dissenters who oppose it. The dissenters are usually on terms of amity with each other, because they are mutually hostile to the establishment. Were there no establishment the bond of union between them would be dissolved, and mutual rancour and jealousy would succeed. An established church acts as a power of pressure, which keeps all sects united with each other, and with themselves; but take away this power, and the harmony would cease; and nothing but irritative commotions would prevail. Each sect would wage a malignant war with every other for the supremacy of its own opinions in the public favour. Thus there would be a furious struggle for the supremacy among all, instead

of that union which there now is among all against the supremacy of that church which is established. In the former case, there would be a general disunion ; in the latter, there is a general union : and certainly, though much bitterness and envy be excited by the church, which is the object of special regard and of political preeminence ; yet that bitterness and envy are not so prejudicial to the happiness and the tranquillity of the country, and the genuine interests of religion, as that greater and more implacable animosity which would prevail if the establishment did not tend to sooth its acrimony, and infuse into it a principle of moderation.

That just and equable state of temperature which is essential to the health of the religious atmosphere, seems best secured by investing a particular church with peculiar distinctions, and connecting it with a due but not inordinate share of temporal advantages. If there were no establishment, one of these two extremes would probably occur.—There would either be a torpid apathy, a fatal unconcern about religious opinions (as seems to be the case, at present, in America), and which would probably gene-

rate an indifference about the fundamental truths of religion itself; or else dissensions in theology would be agitated with such savage fury, and such malignant rancour, that the true spirit of christianity would be exhaled in the heat of the conflict. Either state of the public mind, whether that of cold insensibility or that of envenomed irritation, would be equally injurious to the real interests of revelation; which require that the spirit of inquiry should be kept alive, but that it should be exercised with benevolence and forbearance.—In fine, I am convinced that, for many years, *perhaps* centuries, till pure and real and benevolent, instead of mystic, sophistical, and formal christianity prevail among us—till party-heat and sectarian jealousy have vanished—till the unnatural agitations of religious animosity have entirely subsided in the calm stream of universal charity,—till this happy period arrive, (a period which I hail at an *awful distance*, and say, *even so come*, Lord Jesus!!!) I am convinced that a religious establishment is essential to the peace of the kingdom, and highly conducive to the best interests of revelation.

I have thus supported, and, I trust, without

either partiality or bigotry, without any corrupt or any enthusiastic bias, the utility of a religious establishment. I shall now make a few observations on the peculiar advantages which belong to the tenure of ecclesiastical property. The property of the clergy, of which the actual possession is not hereditary, and to which no one can succeed before the age of twenty-four, is more frequently changing its possessors than any other property in the kingdom. The same living is seldom held by the same family for two generations. Other property may descend from father to son without any particular limitations; and it does not necessarily require any preparatory education, or any specific conditions of moral goodness or mental capacity. But ecclesiastical property does require peculiar qualifications; qualifications which are always associated with, at least, *some degree* of intellectual and moral excellence. It is therefore a property, the nature of whose tenure has a nearer relation to public virtue and to mental improvement than any other property in the kingdom.

It appears to me not an oppressive or absurd, but

a wise and useful policy, in *every state*, to set apart a certain portion of its land or of its productive industry for moral purposes. And what is christianity, rightly understood, but a system of pure and sublime morality, a system of morality simple and artless, but comprehensive and profound, sealed with a divine authority, and founded on eternal sanctions? And what consequently is, or can be, the great and glorious end of an established christian ministry, or a rich christian establishment, but to inculcate virtue and to exemplify beneficence? If the religious establishment in this country do approximate this great end, though with many occasional deviations, its partial abuses vanish in the contemplation of its general usefulness. Would that property which is now appointed by law for the support of the clergy, be converted to a better purpose, or be made more subservient to public utility, if it were transferred to other hands, or melted down into the mass of private property?—The ecclesiastical revenues might, and probably would, be made more productive in other hands; but we ought not so much to calculate whether the property would be physically more productive, but morally more salutary; not whether it would increase the national wealth, but

whether it would improve the national virtue. And whenever, in any measure of political reform, the great question is between the financial aggrandisement of the country, and the moral amelioration of the people, the former is so insignificant a consideration compared to the latter, that it argues as much ignorance as wickedness even for a moment to hesitate about the choice. If the ecclesiastical establishment be, with all its imperfections, auspicious to the interests of virtue, it ought to be maintained though the revenue of the state might be augmented ten hundred-fold by its subversion.

From this subject let us proceed to another topic of most important and interesting discussion, the representation of the people. I have said in my Address to the People (8vo. White, 30), and which I request the reader to peruse in conjunction with this pamphlet, that property ought to form the basis of representation; but as in that work I only suggested a principle, without bringing forward any specific plan of reform, I declined stating the quantum of property which might reasonably be made to constitute the qualification of the elector or of

the representative. At present I shall hazard a few observations on these subjects.

The quantity of property necessary for the qualification of an elector, ought, I think, to be so large as to give *a reasonable ground to hope for the independence of the person entrusted with so important a privilege*. It is hard to define any particular sum which can guarantee, with any thing like a moral certainty, the independence of any individual.

Independence of sentiment depends, in a great measure, on the moderation of individual desire, and the vigorous and ennobling sense of individual integrity. Some will maintain themselves in a state of honourable independence with a very limited income; while others, from the profusion of extravagance, or the rapacity of avarice, will crouch in the trammels of subjection and dependence even with the largest fortune.

All human institutions will necessarily be mingled with imperfections, and much will remain to be reformed after the wisest reformation. But, though in all political regulations we cannot help

mingling evil with good, we ought to endeavour to render the quantity of evil as small as possible; and where we cannot entirely bar the avenues to corruption, we ought to leave the smallest possible space for their admission.

Though we cannot ascertain, in particular individuals, where independence will actually take place, yet we can tell, with some precision, *where the power commences*. He possesses not the power of independence who either depends for his subsistence on the will of others, or the means of whose subsistence are continually at the mercy of common casualties. I should therefore propose to exclude from the elective franchise all persons whatever, who gain their whole livelihood by manual labour, or *who have no real capital whether in land or money bringing in a certain income*. And, on the other hand, I would admit to the privileges of electors all who have a fixed and certain income, accruing either from land or money, and amounting to a sum equal to the collective earnings of an healthy day-labourer in the course of a year. Supposing the average price of labour to be 1s. 6d. per day, the necessary qualification for

each voter would be an annual income equal to about 23l. 8s. per annum. But as the price of labour and the value of money are in a state of continual fluctuation, there ought to be a committee appointed by the government every seven years to ascertain the degree of variation, and to raise or to lower the qualification accordingly.

Now I think, that, if we were to make an income of the amount which I have stated a necessary preliminary for the exercise of the elective franchise, it would by no means be rated too high in order to give a *fair chance* for the display of an independent mind in a matter of such high concern. No man, however moderate his desires, can, without possessing such an income, be raised to that line of circumstances, where the depression of want ends and that of independence begins. It may be objected, " why not suffer the same income to be a qualification, if arising from manual industry ? " I answer, because, from various contingencies, *manual labour is a fluctuating, a precarious, and dependent means of support.*

If moral principle be not necessarily dependent

on the means of subsistence, it is at least intimately connected with it. If easy circumstances do not generate moral principle, they favour its production. They render its growth easy; and it seems dubious, whether, without such a support, it be possible for the most sturdy moralist long to resist the blast of temptation. I may probably at some future period (in a plan which I have devised for the relief of the poor, and which I shall publish as soon as it is matured by longer reflection) trace these observations through a long chain of deductions worthy the attention of the government, and highly interesting to those who sympathise with the wretchedness of the lower orders of the community. *Their* wretchedness is greater than those can even imagine who have not visited their comfortless habitations, and been actual spectators of their depressing and heart-rending miseries. But let us return from this digression.

I have before observed in my Address to the People, p. 33, that mediocrity of fortune is the soil most propitious to virtue. It is that temperate clime in which morality displays the greenest

branches and the fairest fruit ; where neither prosperity withers with its scorching rays, nor adversity chills with its nipping blast.

Mediocrity of fortune seems likewise most favourable to the increase of intellectual energy. It tends to excite the vigorous faculties of the mind, as much as it warms and expands the best affections of the heart.

If, as seems most probable, the greater portion of the talents and of the virtue of the country reside among those who occupy the middle ranks of society, equally remote from everflowing opulence and distressing penury, I think it follows, that that government would be the best constituted, and most likely to display the greatest wisdom and integrity in its civil and political œconomy, in its domestic and foreign relations, in which *those ranks had a preponderance of influence*.—I think, therefore, that, in any plan of parliamentary reform which may be adopted, care should be taken to throw the greatest weight of power into the scale of the middle classes, who are more exempt from corrup-

tion and less corruptible than those above them or those below them.

If the principle, on which this measure is grounded, should be approved, the only difficulty would consist in defining who are the middle classes, or what are those points in the scale of wealth at which mediocrity of fortune begins and ends. A mediocrity of fortune implies something more than the possession of the bare necessities of life. It means the enjoyment of what in England is emphatically called *comfort*, to the exclusion of the gratifications of vanity and of superfluous indulgencies. Might not, then, what is called mediocrity of fortune, be circumscribed within the limits of an income of from 200l. to 2000l. per annum?

On the plan of parliamentary reform, which I have suggested, it would, I think, be a wise measure to divide the voters of England into three classes. In the first class let those be ranged who possess an income of from 23l. 8s. to 200l. per ann.; in the second, those who possess an income of from 200l. to 2000l. per ann.; and in the

third, those who possess from 2000l. to *any* greater annual income. To each individual belonging to the first and third classes, I would give one vote; but to the second or middle class, I think that it would be for the interest of the state to transfer a *double, or even triple portion of the elective franchise*, in order to impart a preponderance of political power to those who abound most in talents and in virtues; who are the least corrupt and corruptible part of the community. The aggregate property of the country would thus be fortified against the partial oppression of rich capitalists on the one side, and the promiscuous ravages of tumultuary anarchists on the other.

I am neither the foe nor the partizan, neither the panegyrist nor the calumniator of the minister, nor of the opposition, but truth compels me to declare, that there has been a great and prominent tendency in some late measures of taxation to depress the middle orders, and totally to extinguish mediocrity of fortune. Such measures accelerate the progress of a country towards slavery and wretchedness; and are ominous indications of

wasting happiness, and expiring freedom. For the middle classes are the only safe and solid rampart against arbitrary power on one side, and tumultuous disorder on the other.

In a despotic country there is no middle class of citizens; or they form but a small portion of the community. Great affluence, or extreme want, are the characteristic features of an arbitrary government. But in a free country, where property is respected, industry is excited by the genial stimulus of security; and the accumulation of capital is encouraged by the protection that is afforded it. In a despotic state the middle classes are usually the victims of the subordinate agents of despotism, who are themselves often the victims of the great despot above them. Mediocrity of fortune prevails most in free countries, because in them the spirit of industry is roused by universal excitement into universal action; but the same spirit remains either totally torpid, or is only very partially excited, where property is insecure. The less secure property is, the less the zeal in acquiring it. Under the suspicious, the suspected, and suspecting, reign

of despotism, individuals are more sedulous to get rich by oppression than by industry.

The middle ranks have originally emerged, and, where property is secure, and industry is powerfully excited, are *continually emerging from the inferior conditions*. By small but continual accumulations, the peasant or the artizan acquire property, and rise above the level of their original poverty. The political or social body, inspired with the holy flame of freedom, is in a state of unceasing ferment and *wholesome agitation*. The animating stimulus of industry awakens the whole mass into action, and calls forth every energy of the body or the mind; but which the baleful touch of tyranny would instantly render inert and frozen.

In a despotic state there is a dreary, a still, and lifeless vacancy in that part of the political system which should be occupied by the middle ranks; and the two extremities seem, as it were, seized with a paralysis. But, in a free country, the middle classes serve as a centre of communication between the two extremes; and infuse health, animation, and

activity, into both. They incite the indigent to industrious exertion; and they often save the illustrious from decay.

In a free country, the individuals who belong to the middle classes seldom remain long stationary; they ascend to the summit of the highest ranks by parsimony and activity; or they are overtaken, in the race of wealth and power, by those beneath them, and who are continually pressing on their steps; and thus they sink by sloth or extravagance, or the division of property, into "life's low vale," from which their ancestors originally rose, and from which their descendants may hereafter aspire to rise.

Where the middle ranks are the most populous the happiness of the community must be the greatest, because the most equably diffused. Where there are no middle ranks, energy of exertion and order of pursuit necessarily languish in the lowest. An easy scale of ascent is wanting to the humble, and of descent to the lofty. Where there is no happy interval between power and weakness, be-

tween luxury and want, the poor are depressed by the height which they have to climb ; and the great are placed on a steep and frowning precipice, where there is nothing to break the severity of their fall.

The present is a time big with danger. Innovation threatens us on all sides. The sincere friend to the genuine principles of the British constitution, must with a painful and trembling anxiety behold it at this moment standing on a narrow, and I fear a wasting isthmus, between the tremendous abyss of despotism on the one side, and of anarchy on the other.

Despotism and anarchy are the two extremes that counteract each other, though they are often mixed together. Despotism usually ends in anarchy ; and anarchy often rebounds to despotism. Despotism rouses the convulsive struggles of freedom, and which, in their reaction, often only consolidate the oppression that produced them.

Both despotism and anarchy are equally destructive of property. Anarchy seizes it like the

vulture with ravenous talons ; despotism gorges it like the serpent by a slow absorption.—Without great wisdom and moderation in our councils, we may become the prey of one of these two merciless fiends. In order, if possible, to avert this fatal catastrophe of our freedom and our happiness, I have proposed to raise the middle orders to a preponderance of influence in the scale of national power, and *to give universally to PROPERTY a greater share than property at present has in the choice of the representative.*

The House of Commons in England are or ought to be the representatives of property. The great design of the institution of that house was to shield the public property from the lawless and arbitrary ravages of the executive, and to levy fair and impartial imposts on the people, The House of Commons, who should be jealous economists, rather than lavish disbursers, honest guardians, rather than improvident spendthrifts of the public money, ought to grant no farther aids than are absolutely necessary for the public necessities, and requisite to support the royal family and the

government in a state of splendour and dignity becoming a great and wealthy empire.



Consistently with the design of an House of Commons, which is the protection as much as the taxation of property, it follows, I think, that the several members of that house should be persons of real not fancied property; that they may have a real stake in the welfare of the country, and *a real personal interest in æconomising the property of the people*.—Those persons are not fit to be trusted with the purse of the nation who have no purse of their own. Those persons are not fit to manage the great revenue of an opulent kingdom who themselves form no part of the source from which that revenue flows; and who, consequently, have a stronger bias to public peculation than to public æconomy. The more a member of the House of Commons contributes to the public revenue, the more he is interested to see that that revenue be well expended and honestly applied.

I think that the British constitution would receive a great increase of stability, and the general

interests of property an additional security, if the qualification for each member of the House of Commons were augmented to, *at least*, twice the amount of that qualification which is at present required for a county member. This increased qualification cannot be esteemed too great, if we consider that the value of money has decreased in at least a quintuple ratio, since the present rates of parliamentary qualification were established.

The French, by not making property the base of representation, filled their legislature with needy and fraudulent adventurers, who despised public œconomy because they had nothing themselves to œconomise ; and who studied the ravages of confiscation rather than the just, the regular, and orderly proceedings of finance. They waged a war against capital, and they caused it to disappear. They laid heavy, unjust, and partial burthens on the wealthy proprietors ; and they thus exhausted those stores which would have refreshed the streams of private and public prosperity, and have stimulated all the salubrious energies of productive industry.

By plundering the rich, they stuck a dagger into the sacred breast of Public Credit; and though they proclaimed war to the palace and peace to the cottage, they proved the most destructive foes that poverty ever had to encounter. By shifting the vivifying power of general confidence, they drained the fountain of industry to the very sand: and they consequently diminished the means of subsistence. They forced a great mass of productive population into the armies, and they formed those armies into tax-gatherers to pamper their lust of speculation. In fine, they proved the truth of this observation, that a needy and beggarly representative will impoverish the richest empire.

Had the French legislators been rich proprietors, and *the representatives of property, rather than of population*, the government would not have sunk into the gulph of bankruptcy, and the annals of France would not have been disgraced by so many atrocious acts of confiscation:—acts which would not have been adopted by the policy of barbarians who were never instructed in the sacred principles of social order; but whom an instinctive sense of

propriety would have taught that it was as impolitic as inhuman to attempt to rule by unceasing devastation.

It was said by a writer of an eccentric but splendid and captivating genius, that a revolution which cost the destruction of a single life cost too much.—I will not stay to examine the justness of this remark; but I think, that every man, who has a heart to feel as well as a head to think, will agree with me, that where reformatory can be procured without, they ought not to be obtained by the misery of an individual.—We may do good to avoid evil; but I doubt whether morality will authorise us to do evil, that good may come out of it. Morality regards the principles more than the ends of action. Criminal beginnings may lead, but *they seldom do lead to virtuous results*; and it appears to me as preposterous, as it is wicked, to lay a foundation of crimes, in order to erect a superstructure of virtues. I believe that it will always be found most wise, as well as most safe, with respect to individual conduct and to national policy, *never to deviate in a single instance, or from any attractions of probable ad-*

vantage, from the great, the rigid and unbending laws of moral obligation. And of this I feel a firm conviction, that those reforms are likely to be the most lasting, and must, from the certain operation of moral causes, be the most beneficial, in which justice has been the most regarded and humanity the least outraged.

Whenever any abuse is reformed either in church or state, the losses of individuals ought to be compensated by an equivalent. Thus, for instance, if the rotten boroughs were abolished, the proprietors ought to be remunerated; when abuses have been continued through a long succession of years, and have received the sanction of time, the emoluments attached to them partake, in a measure, of the sacredness of private property, and become subject, on the broad principles of justice, to the same compensations to which that property is subject, whenever it is either impaired or destroyed or transferred to public uses for purposes of general utility. It is unjust, but it is too common, particularly with those licentious persons who disjoin politics and morals, to confound the proprietor with

the author of an abuse; to consider him as the cause, who is only the accidental possessor of the emolument.

If certain beneficial reforms cannot be carried into effect without great inconvenience and loss to individuals, those individuals ought to be indemnified. Sinecure places and pensions and rotten boroughs are bad in themselves, and ought to be abolished; but we should take care that we do not outrage justice in the blind zeal of reformation. Wantonly to extinguish sinecure places and pensions, without allowing any indemnity to the present proprietors, would be to drive hundreds to beggary and despair. And would this be the edict of justice or the impulse of humanity? Public benefit ought not to be founded on private robbery. Whenever it is possible for the state to make a compensation to an individual for the losses which he sustains by any public change, there a compensation ought to be made; and where a full equivalent cannot be given, there such a recompense should be afforded as may accord, *in the nearest practicable degree*, with the special circumstances of the case,

that the injustice donë, and the suffering sustained, may be as small as possible.

When the French constituent assembly seized the ecclesiastical domains, they paid too little attention to the humane and wise principle of compensation. In the wantonness of devastation they inflicted misery on thousands. They did, indeed, in order to give some colour of sympathy to their plans of merciless proscription, stipulate a paltry pittance to the helpless victims : but that pittance was soon withdrawn ; the national truth and honour were violated ; and the religious orders were exposed, by the injustice of the representative, to the horrors of want, and the agonies of despair. Manifold as were the corruptions of the French ecclesiastics, they have been exceeded by their sufferings ; and, though I condemn their conduct, I sympathise with their misfortunes.

The number of reformers would rapidly increase, and plans of reform the most beneficial, and on a large and extensive scale, would be universally patronized, and easily accomplished, if it

were once settled as the invariable preliminary of all reform, that the principle of compensation should be sacredly observed; that public changes should not be associated with gross acts of individual injustice; and that the lust of innovation should not absorb the duties of humanity. Proposals of reformation are usually drowned in the clamour, or counteracted by the intrigue, of the parties interested in their prevention, and who are menaced with poverty by their adoption. The clamour, therefore, is a reclamation against injustice; and the intrigue is only the struggle of self-preservation. But the clamour would be appeased, and the flame of resistance would be extinguished, if reformers would strenuously support those mild and conciliatory measures of compensation which I have recommended, and which justice dictates, and humanity prescribes.

Reform implies amelioration, and ought not to be blackened by cruelty. It ought to be the subject of universal congratulation, rather than the theme of even partial regret. It is, indeed, too common an opinion;—an opinion which has of

late years been echoed through the world by the clarions of a sophisticated and unfeeling policy, that, in measures of reform, the good of the community excludes all consideration of the good or evil of individuals. But, ye disciples of the apathy of Godwin, or the ferocity of Marat, who pretended to justify cruelty by calculations of humanity, is not the community composed of individuals? and, therefore, is not the less evil which is done to individuals the more good done to the community? Or, is not the most good done to the community when the least evil is done to individuals?

The wise and temperate reformer will not suffer (if he can prevent it, and he will studiously labour for the prevention) a single instance of injustice to sully the glory of his patriotic schemes.

Another reason why reforms are often attended with such violent commotions, is, that their authors, not contented with a slow, a gentle, and gradual, are eager for a precipitate improvement. With rash improvidence they often cut down the tree to get at the fruit. Rather than mature their plans

and prepare their operations, they will even hazard the ruin of their own schemes by forcing an untimely adoption. Impatient to finish, they apply caustics instead of mild applications. They aspire to work with the velocity of lightning; and their labours are the labours of destruction.

Political abuses are not usually of sudden and rapid, but, like excrescences on the human body, of slow and gradual growth. And reformations should seldom be sudden and violent; but, like the healthy processes of nature, *a series of successive improvements*. The natural body recovers from a diseased to a sound state, by tardy alterations; nor can the political body, when once corrupt, regain its pristine energy by an hasty restoration. Violent beginnings have violent ends. But jacobinical fury has not patience to wait for the silent change of opinions or the tardy progress of events; and frustrates by endeavouring to anticipate their arrival.

Of the many abuses which call for a reformation, both in our civil and ecclesiastical system, many might with safety be *immediately* corrected;

others it would be more prudent to leave to the operations of time, and to remove by *gradual alterations*. There is often more wisdom in preventing abuses for the future than in destroying their present existence.

A reform, conducted in the mode which I have stated, would not be a violent change, but a progressive improvement; not an innovation, but an amelioration; not exciting turbulence, but producing composure; not generating misery, but increasing happiness; gradually extirpating corruption and extinguishing discontent,—and, being directed by the principles of justice and associated with the sympathies of humanity, would not be a fleeting and transient, but a lasting benefit. It would renovate the strength and perpetuate the existence of the English government.

The present minister of this country has the power of reform in his own hands. His popularity is so great and his influence so vast, that he might, with the greatest facility, achieve a reformation *which would be surpassed by none which ever preceded*

it in glory or in usefulness. Let him then begin instantly this important work; and execute it with the gentle and wary hand of moderation. Let him begin instantly, because the danger is pressing; and it is necessary to stop the progress of our decay. Corruption, if it be not checked, will increase.

I have now finished my reflections on these important subjects. I have spoken my mind freely, and without any party-bias or any political animosity. Perhaps, in the present angry fermentation of different factions, it would be presumptuous to imagine that the sentiments contained in this work will obtain much popularity; but, I trust, that when a calmer period arrive, they will meet with general approbation.

There is often a great aversion to political works written by divines; and, I must confess, that, in general, that aversion is just; for I think that there is nothing more disgusting than a clergyman degenerated into a politician, in the common accepta-

tion of that term. By the common acceptation of the term politician, I understand *a person, who to serve his own interest, becomes the tool of a party*; and when I behold the disciple of the humble Jesus become such a tool, my indignation is roused, and my heart sickens at the sight. But, *rightly understood*, politics, if they be not the peculiar province, are at least a part, and in my opinion, a serious part of the duty of divines*; for *what are politics, rightly understood, but a comprehensive morality?* Justice and humanity are, or, at least, ought to be, the foundation of all civil institutions, and of all political speculations; and without justice and humanity, what are politics, or what is government, but a system of oppression and cruelty?

¶ Oh! si l'on voyoit sortir comme autre fois du fond des deserts, apres des années retraite, des hommes armés de la morale, exercent le ministère de la parole contre les vices du peuple contre les fautes des rois, contre les abus de l'administration, SI CE SACERDOCE ANTIQUE se reproduisoit de nos jours pour tonner sur les prevaricateurs, oh! que ces prophetes imprimeroient a leur mission un caractère de majesté et de grandeur.

Mercier, L'an 2440, Tom. I. p. 12,

THE END.

ERRATA.

Page 18, line 10, *for* far *read for*
— 25, — 8, — changing — changeling
— 25, — 13, — secret — sacred

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